

Thank you, members of the Texas House Higher Education Committee for allowing me this opportunity to provide feedback to your posted requests for information gathering on interim charge #4.

My name is **Alvee Hossain**. I am currently a student enrolled at **University of Houston**.

Please see my submission below in response to your posted requests for information gathering on your interim charge #4.

Interim Charge 4: Study the prevalence of online courses and degrees in higher education. Examine how institutions providing online courses and programs are accredited, particularly courses and programs originating from states other than Texas. Evaluate how students whose courses and degrees are primarily online perform in terms of persistence and degree completion 2 versus students who take courses in traditional classroom settings. Study labor market outcomes for students with primarily online courses and degrees versus more traditional programs.

1. What are the existing barriers to online learning for students and faculty? What have institutions done to alleviate and eliminate these barriers?

The barriers that exist to online learning are internet access, technical knowledge & established etiquette. The biggest and most apparent problem is access to reliable internet access. Not every student has access to a reliable internet connection, or sometimes even a computer/smartphone. Because of this, these students typically use their public resources, such as public libraries and college labs, to complete their classes – an option no longer available due to COVID-19 restrictions. Second, many professors are not tech-savvy and do not know how to properly operate in an online class. Older professors who have reached tenure have spent years not having to learn new ways to teach, therefore the sudden need to switch over in a small window of time leads to being unproductive classes. Third, there is not an established etiquette in online learning. In a classroom, the established method is sitting at your desk, listening to your professor, and taking notes – no talking or getting up unless necessary. In a call, there's no basic expected etiquette regarding keeping cameras or microphones on or off. The inconsistency can cause students to get distracted from an already difficult way of learning.

2. With institutions having shifted instruction to online-only in the Spring of 2020 because of the pandemic, what lessons have been learned?

I learned that professors need to be properly trained on how to operate a class online. Whenever someone gets hired for a job, there are mandatory protocols to learn in the case of different scenarios. They know how to respond to an accident, report a crime, evacuate or take shelter during an emergency, and more. Similarly, it should be mandatory to learn how to operate a completely online classroom, so there is no time wasted in learning while switching over. A pandemic isn't the only need for this, as sometimes online learning is needed during natural disasters.

3. What are the challenges related to technology, quality, accessibility or other considerations? The Committee is seeking the perspectives of college/university administration, faculty and

students.

As I mentioned before, access to internet and computers is a challenge for some students. But even for the students with internet, the connection is not always optimal for an online class. When in a public area from a university, such as on campus or in housing, a massive amount of students using the internet at the same time can crash the Wi-Fi, or even the websites they are accessing, making online classes even harder.

Respectfully,

Alvee Hossain
University of Houston
9611 Fawnmist Cove, Tomball, TX 77375
alveehossain@hotmail.com
8323146817